THE REPUBLICAN : An Historical Pastiche

Episode I : A Funny Thing Happened On The Way To The Vomitorium

By "Screenwriter From Groombridge34"

at groombridge34.net

Version created 2026-04-28

The fortunes of the most pathetic patrician in Rome start to turn when he accidentally becomes a favorite of Caesar, despite being politically opposed.

The Republican : An Historical Pastiche © 2026 by "Screenwriter From Groombridge34" is licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 4.0. To view a copy of this license, visit https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/

ROME - ESTABLISHING

The city of Rome in approximately the first century BCE. Exact year, unspecified : our story is an historical pastiche. It is wrong on purpose, but in a unique way.

We fly over the city, in toward the luxurious villas of the Palatine hill. It would be cliche in a documentary. Our narrator is similarly dry and generic :

HISTORIAN
(V.O)
Rome of the Caesars: city of marble, master of the known world. And the heart of that great empire was the Palatine. The greatest of the city's seven famous hills, and home to her most influential and powerful men.

A freedman steps out of one of the more stately homes with a bucket full of indistinct filth, which he launches off the hill. The filth lands outside a slightly less stately mansion on a lower hill with en exaggerated, comic squelch.

Our Historian is surprised to be able to hear the sound. And why have we left the Palatine?

HISTORIAN (cont'd)
(improvising)
The, uh, Caelian Hill, another seat of luxury and decadence, famous for...

Another servant, working in the garden of this manor, is ready. He very quickly takes a nearby shovel and launches the filth further down the chain with another squishy noise.

HISTORIAN (cont'd)
But in the wake of rapid expansion...

The caretaker of the next target spots the filth before it lands. He reaches into a pile of plundered Greek booty - weapons and jars and coins - and pulls out a large shield with a Corinthian helmet charge. He deflects the payload further down into the garden of our protagonist, FELIX. Sqwitch, plop.

Felix' lethargic freedman, HERMES, is in the process of opening the gates to the courtyard. He looks to the filth and shrugs.

HISTORIAN (cont'd)
However, this vast empire needed more than a few great men. Rome's many lesser hills were home to Rome's many lesser patricians.

It is smaller and humbler than our previous examples, but Felix' domus is still clearly a wealthy man's home.

FELIX' DOMUS

Felix sits and eats a breakfast: bread, fruit, weak wine. He looks into the distance thoughtfully. His Gaulish slave-girl, RUFIA, passes by and takes an empty container from his table.

FELIX
Rufia, did I ever tell you about my ancestor, Sextus Felix Victorinia, who dared to speak out against Tarquin?

RUFIA
No, master.

FELIX
He dared to speak out against Tarquin.

RUFIA
A brave man!

Felix takes another bite, his story adequately concluded. After a lengthy beat, he decides to elaborate.

FELIX
Years before anyone else dared, he simply walked up one day like it was nothing, and read out a list of criticisms.

RUFIA
What happened, master?

FELIX
Tarquin ran him through on the spot.

RUFIA
A brave man!

Hermes appears in the doorway. Felix sees and waves Rufia away.

Hermes enters and calls across the room.

HERMES
Master!

FELIX
Hermes!

Felix motions him come. He is far from as fleet-footed as his divine namesake. This is, in part, defiance.
We wait...

HERMES
(Tantalizing)
The sculptor is arriving, and it looks like he has a little something.

Felix lights up.

FELIX
Excellent, Excellent!

Felix springs from the table and heads towards the courtyard. Hermes suppresses a snicker.

FELIX' COURTYARD

While Felix' courtyard is a fine place with young fig trees in stone-slabbed garden beds, the surface is imperfectly kept.
A few commoners struggle to wheel a cart carrying a larger than life statue, covered.

Hermes and Felix step aside.

HISTORIAN
The day of any real, respectable member of the upper class began with the *salutio,* the formalized display of deference between client and patron.

The commoners yell, trying to guide the cart across the stones. A wheel cuts right through the filth were it still lies, spreading the mess, and making more rude, comic sounds.

They soon come to rest. Chief among them, ARCHAIUS, steps forward, deferentially stooped.

ARCHAIUS
Gaius Felix...

Felix is looking past him at the statue. He's been expecting it.

FELIX
(half attentive, impatient)
Archaius. The most loyal. You were recently telling me how well your household was doing.

ARCHAIUS
All thanks to you, of course, *patronus.* With all their success, in fact, I had the time to finally express my gratitude and honor you and your family's prestige.

FELIX
By all means.

One of the commoners pulls off the cover. Felix freezes and blanches.

The statue, of Felix, is mostly of equal quality to the others around the city, and a good likeness, but standing bolt upright with his hands by his sides.

FELIX (cont'd)
What in Tartarus is this?

Felix circles the statue, hoping against hope to discover a good angle.

ARCHAIUS
Sir, it's your likeness.

FELIX
I look like I sat on a *fasces!*

Archaius is deeply, earnestly ashamed.

ARCHAIUS
I'm sorry, I've offended you.

FELIX
*ab urba conditia 2*00 called. They want their style back!

HERMES
Called what?

HISTORIAN
Called what, indeed. The ancient Romans had no telephones.

Felix turns to to half-address the camera, as if it were The Historian. This will be indicated by a 'to historian' parenthetical henceforth.

FELIX
(to historian)
It visited your house while you were out and left a message! It shouted so loud you can hear it centuries later, still echoing!

HISTORIAN
Acceptable, barely.

ARCHAIUS
I'll fix it, I'll do anything.

Felix composes himself, for now.

FELIX
No, no. You've worked hard and tried your best. It's lovely, truly. It's the correct thing to honor the patrician...

Archaius backs away, bowing, and starts directing others to remove the statue.

FELIX (cont'd)
...the patrician who would manage to find and acquire the only sculptor in the known world who hasn't heard of Contrapposto! Look it up, sweetheart. Cont-ra-post-o. Latin word. You know, La-tin?

Archaius motions someone to replace the cover on the statue.

Hermes tries to soothe Felix, steers him to a nearby bench. Felix sits, trying to regain some composure.

HERMES
Come, come. You work so hard, take some time. It's not so bad. Let me get rid of them.

Under the pretext of superfluously guiding Archaius' group away, Hermes mischievously steps on the cover by fake accident. The cover comes off and Hermes waves off attempts to replace it. He returns to Felix.

FELIX
(to Hermes, quietly)
How can you live in Roma, city of marble, look at statues all day every day, and think that's okay? Gods, how can you look at other actual humans with bodies and then say 'yep, that's people, alright.'

HERMES
I know sir. Common. Plebian. No, *barbarian!*

While Felix hangs his head, Hermes steals a glance at the spectacle of the statue departing and chuckles to himself.

FELIX
Completely right! I'm not going to let this get to me!

Felix looks down at the filth, which is now spread around all over the place and attracting flies.

FELIX (cont'd)
(pointing upward)
But those arseholes up on the hill - they're not barbarian or common.

He moves to tower over the filth as if to intimidate it.

FELIX (cont'd)
Look at this filth that they'd foist on me. The greatest of all great cities. Built on responsibility and reputation, and they cast this on the proud Victoriniae. Hermes, did did I ever tell you about my ancestor, Sextus Felix Victorinia, who dared to speak out against Tarquin?

HERMES
A brave man!

SERIES OF SHOTS - FELIX RANTING

As the household gets on with life, Felix continues to rant:

Another client bows before him in the courtyard:

FELIX
Nobody threw filth on S. Felix! I mean, Tarquin did drag his torso around his pig pen eleven times, but who else would dare...

Walking down a city street with Hermes :

FELIX (cont'd)
Mighty Roma! Our forefathers -- Victoriniae and the rest -- built firm streets, sturdy aqueducts. And you know what, the mighty sewer system, the *Cloaca Maxima!* Even that is impressive, even that makes me proud! how much has Rome paid for that?

Taking a public bath :

FELIX (cont'd)
This place should be beautiful and clean, and damn it, S. Felix, I'm gonna speak my mind on this! There should be titles -- and, yes, public responsibilities -- for me! Who else competent is doing it these days?

Back in his house, very close :

FELIX (cont'd)
I mean, we are Romans! Not some cowardly, bedraggled, trouser wearing Celts!

We pull out to see that he is using the kitchen toilet. It's immediately and directly next to a table and oven setup where Rufia is making some bread. He's talking right at her.

FELIX (cont'd)
No offense. You understand, right?

RUFIA
Of course, master. M'people are foul.

SERIES OF SHOTS - TEMPLE OF VESTA

Rufia continues kneading. A sad, tired, broken woman. We pull away slowly, out the window she stares from longingly.
We hear Felix continue to conduct the family business.

HISTORIAN
This was, naturally, a deeply patriarchal society. Even among the most privileged families, women were subject to the *potestas*, the dominion of the male head of the household...

We can now barely see Rufia, and have moved our focus to the temple of Vesta. We hear faint period music.

HISTORIAN (cont'd)
But such societies always have some allowances for female influence. Societal pressure valves, if you will. One such allowance - the prestige and influence of Rome's only all female clergy, the virgin priestesses of Vesta - the Vestals.

The music grows louder. We see the sombre figures moving around the temple, braziers burning.

HISTORIAN (cont'd)
Keepers of the symbolic hearth of Rome, maintainers of the continual, sacred hymn. Wearers of the divine bouffants. Wait, what?

The hymn is quiet and distant, The Historian has probably noticed it before most of the audience, but it's becoming clearer. The holy song uses period instruments, but it is in fact the B-52s *Roam*. The vestals sport the associated coiffure.

HISTORIAN (cont'd)
That's *obviously* not any modality used by the ancients!

The historian stands up, knocking microphones. Now he shouts from across the room.

HISTORIAN (cont'd)
That's too stupid! Too Stupid!

The B-52 Vestals and the pop song chorus form the basis of our :

MAIN THEME SEQUENCE

The Vestals. Short clips from the series. Slow, rotating pans of the most convincing sets. Fabricated artefacts like death masks, busts, coins, all featuring the likenesses of our actors in character - convincing but with unexpected, comic expressions.

REGULUS' HOUSE - COURTYARD

One of the topmost luxury houses, overlooking the city, strewn with the detritus of last night's... orgy? Jars and plates and piles of clothes and food scraps. Three individuals remain.

The vague, ahistorical character in our story called CAESAR remains central and elevated even in this disorder. He currently wears a sack over his head. The three characters still present are his inner circle of confidants - his entourage.

BARBATUS huddles passed out in a very large ball of mostly shed clothes. A skinny, hairy, seedy older man. You would recognize him instantly as a perpetrator if he appeared in Law & Order S.V.U.

A beam of sunlight strikes DECIMUS, a handsome young nobleman with the finest head of hair in Rome. He is wearing a grimacing theater mask - upside down to block out the sunlight.

REGULUS
(off screen)
This is hilarious, check it out!

DECIMUS peeks out of the mask. He squints, nauseous, puts it back, tries again, finally forces himself to rip it off. His face wears almost the same grimace as the mask. He throws up into an urn.

REGULUS stomps in. A former soldier, large and tough. Still a direct and practical man but perhaps no longer *laconic* : he has an adequately urbane demeanor for his new life although his colleagues occasionally tease him about this.

REGULUS (cont'd)
you'll laugh your head off.

BARBATUS stirs. His look is filthy.

BARBATUS
Regulus! You prick, we're hungover as Hades....

REGULUS
...I know I know, I horked up half the Tiber myself, but these dipshits aren't going to be around forever.

Caesar sits bolt upright with a start.

CAESAR
(muffled in the sack)
We shall go to the funny. But now, Caesar hungers!

Decimus locates an abandoned plate of figs within reach.

DECIMUS
(waving the figs)
Oh, oh, your highness! Figs! Open up.

Caesar tears the sack off. Infinitely mercurial, outrageously hammy, larger-than-life, a show-stealer. He's a wizard, a Time Lord, a Transylvanian.

Caesar raises his hand.

CAESAR
On my signal, unleash hell.

He turns to Decimus, opens his mouth, and drops his hand. Decimus launches the fruit. Although the distance is great, they are teammates in sync. Caesar catches the fig in his mouth and eats it.

CAESAR
And again!

Decimus launches another fig. Caesar catches it, and starts choking. All are shocked awake, standing up, circling around him.

DECIMUS
Oh fuck! Do something!

Eyes turn to Regulus, the most capable.

REGULUS
Like what?!

BARBATUS
Punch him! Right in the gut!

REGULUS
That's the father of Rome.

BARBATUS
I'm not strong enough! You have to hit real hard or it won't work!

REGULUS
I'm not going to be doing that.

Decimus makes spinning circle motions with both his forefingers

DECIMUS
You have to turn him right around.

REGULUS
What?

DECIMUS
Wholly upside down.

REGULUS
Decimus, we can't hardly get ourselves upright right now! Do you think that I can do something like, get behind him, and squeeze?

BARBATUS
Eh? Something you learned on campaign in Greece, Regulus?

DECIMUS
Do something!

Caesar's choking becomes more intense. His color is changing.

DECIMUS (cont'd)
I was always his favorite, you all know it!

BARBATUS
Sure. Where are your titles, then?

DECIMUS
Thinking about titles at a time like this!?

REGULUS
Enough! Caesar!

The fig finds its own way out, arcing across the room and landing with a ping on a tray.

DECIMUS
Thank the gods!

Caesar is thoroughly unperturbed.

CAESAR
Woah! Almost lost me there, lads.

BARBATUS
But, sire, what would Rome do without you?

They share a beat, then all laugh ironically.

CAESAR
Good one, B. Now, to that funny thing, one and all.

They gather and begin to depart.

DECIMUS
Sorry about, you know, pretending to your authority just now.

CAESAR
Not at all, not at all. I know how it is. And where's my sto-ic?

Caesar takes a nearby spoon and tray and bangs it hard. The others wince, still hungover.

CAESAR (cont'd)
Hero! Hero!

They leave together.

CYRENACIUS' VILLA - COURTYARD

As a country house, it is quite large, closer in status and wealth to Regulus than the embarrassed Felix. The home of Felix' Brother in Law CYRENACIUS - a gormless, moonfaced classical dudebro. He is teaching his three young sons some basic techniques for murder.

HISTORIAN
One of the factors that led to the end of the limited Roman democracy was the consolidation of wealth in the hands of a few wealthy, and increasingly out of touch, rural landowners - the rise of *latifundia*.

CYRENACIUS
Some of the Belgae, they say, are twice my height. Does a Roman let that scare him?

CHILD
No! Hit 'em in the dick!

CYRENACIUS
Right!

The kids run around wild with wooden gladii squealing. Sometimes the swords clack together but they mostly prefer to inflict actual pain on each others bodies.

A freeman enters, Felix behind him.

FREEMAN
Felix Victorinia, master.

CYRENACIUS
Oh look, there's one now!

One glimpse, and the pack is rushing towards Felix. Felix frets.

FELIX
(thinking quickly)
But boys. The true strength of the Roman army is control, discipline, restraint.

The children are closing in.

FELIX (cont'd)
Who wants to play "obey the commander?"

He points to a spot

FELIX (cont'd)
(barking in a deep voice)
Form up here, men!

The unstoppable bundle of boys barrels into Felix. He is instantly knocked down and bloodied.

FELIX (cont'd)
Help!

The children mercilessly kick and strike him on the ground.

CHILDREN
You pube-trimming Celt! You beer-guzzling Celt! You tree-fucking Celt. Hit 'em in the dick!

FELIX
(with genuine panic)
Cyrenacius! They're killing me!

Cyrenacius doesn't really know what to do. He shrugs.

CYRENACIUS
Woah, uh. Littlies. That's right - that's what you do to the Celt - but you know that's really your uncle Felix. So, uh, come on...

CYRENACIUS' HOUSE - INSIDE

Felix has his extensive wounds dressed by his hypercompetent, critically unrecognized, out-of-patience sister, CIARA, Cyrenacius' wife.

CYRENACIUS
Sorry, bro. You know, I was there, and I was thinking "What do I say" - I hated watching you get beat and all, but, I'm thinking "how do I get them to stop, without totally making them think they should show mercy to Rome's enemies" - you get it?

FELIX
Oh, I got it alright.

CYRENACIUS
(oblivious)
Sweet!

The clack clack of wooden swords and squeals of sadistic joy from the courtyard - Cyrenacius is drawn to it.

CIARA
Go ahead, love, go play.

CYRENACIUS
(child-like)
All-right!

He composes himself

CYRENACIUS (cont'd)
You gotta teach 'em manliness, you just... gotta turn them into men!

He begins to skip into the courtyard before catching himself.

CYRENACIUS (cont'd)
Nothing is more important.

He leaves.

CIARA
Three boys, Gaius. Three sets of the same eyes as him, with about as much behind them.

FELIX
They're yours too, sis. The renowned Victorinia intelligence is in there. If you can get them out of his influence for maybe five seconds. Doesn't he have to go to Rome sometimes?

CIARA
Less and less. I'm becoming quite the republican I tell you.

FELIX
Me too. Tyranny isn't the system that got us here, so why would you...

CIARA
(shocked and worried)
Sssh. A joke, bro.

FELIX
(now hushed)
Of course. But I just... did Boofhead-in-law out there conquer a huge swathe of Africa for the glory of Caesar, or the SPQR?

CIARA
(laughing)
Listen! You have to listen! I keep telling you : It was nothing!

Ciara thinks hard and makes a decision.

CIARA (cont'd)
The whole truth. I will tell you once. Never repeat it.

FELIX
I swear.

CIARA
I believe you. So, the glorious conquest of Cyrenacia...

PALACE OF CYRENE - FLASHBACK

A Hellenistic palace among the palms of North Africa.

Now inside the palace - over-dramatically lit. We have entered a classic period epic where Shakespearian actors chew the scenery.

Cyrenacius in gleaming formal armor, helmet tucked at his side, is flanked by two centurions. The BASILEUS sits on a throne, clutching his chest, bowed over, but still commanding the scene. ELDERS lurk around in a circle.

The Basileus coughs dramatically during his monologue.

BASILEUS
The mighty sword of Rome finally arrives. Settle, settle, my friend and benefactor. No need to bloody it.

We cut between the Basileus and Cyrenacius - Cyrenacius is bored out of his mind and fidgeting like a child throughout the entire scene. He taps his feet, twiddles his thumbs, slaps his face, hops from foot to foot...

BASILEUS (cont'd)
Nor even to draw it and expose it to our air, full of decay and decline as it is. Do you see any sons? What use wealth or armies or power without them? And the vultures that circle? I would spare them the masquerade. Ours is the world of the old. The new is there, the wolf, the eagle.

Cyrenacius is still fidgeting. He doesn't give the slightest shit.

CYRENACIUS
(through gritted teeth, to himself)
Come on, come on, come the fuck on you boring old Greek fuck. Some of us have shit to do.

BASILEUS
Countrymen. Do not bother yourselves with greed, ambition. Spare tearing each other apart. I do this to spare you, a reward for your loyalty and nobility. Rome, take my burden. Cyrene, a burden you are. Lighter it will be... for one such as you.

He dies hammily. Cyrenacius walks up and shoves him -- nay, throws him -- off the throne. The corpse falls onto the ground in a grotesque pose.

CYRENACIUS
(rolling eyes)
Alright, he's gone. Finally.

He turns to the elders

CYRENACIUS (cont'd)
Any of you -- heh heh -- *dicks* have anything to say about what you just saw there?

One elder steps forward.

ELDER
We have a tradition of democracy, Hellenes! The Basileus may have been a king of sorts, but he was always a symbol of the people...

Cyrenacius takes a bold step and punches the Elder right in the dick. It's gratuitous. The Elder is removed from the scene, highly likely to die later from internal injuries.

CYRENACIUS
Conquered! Any more objections?

He barely pauses.

CYRENACIUS (cont'd)
Hail Rome!

CENTURIONS
Hail Rome!

Cyrenacius is already leaving.

ELDERS
Hail Rome!

CYRENACIUS' HOUSE - RESUMED

FELIX
At least he's consistent.

CIARA
"Conqueror of Cyrene" -- the cognomen is a sham. For weeks, before I could control the narrative he was known as...

She leans even closer.

CIARA (cont'd)
(faintest whisper)
Hastafrangus.

SUBTITLE
Shaftsmasher

A moment of silent reflection.

FELIX
I wanted to talk to you already today. I spent some time recently with the death mask of S. Felix --

CIARA
Tarquin nailed his limbs up in funny places around the city

FELIX
Yeah but not ha ha funny!

Ciara laughs heartily.

FELIX
If Tarquin were actually witty, don't you think a few of his bits would be in the annals?

CIARA
(still laughing)
Love you, Felix. You make me remember there's still good men left in Rome. If maybe not smart ones.

FELIX
Praise from Caesar.

CIARA
Pah, praise from another man-idiot.

A tense moment.

FELIX
Now *that* we can't let people hear. "Cyrenacius" isn't such a hero to protect you from *that.*

She looks at him. *We <u>are</u> the same*. Her mental gears turn. She tends the wounds some more.

FELIX
They literally throw shit on me.

CIARA
Okay, but no more pointless Victorinia sacrifices. If you are restless, if you are dissatisfied... Let me see what I can arrange.

FELIX
You?

CIARA
No, blockhead out there, obviously. After I ask him.

FELIX
That's... so kind.

CIARA
Just remember to humiliate some fools for me.

FELIX
I'll see what I can do.

They look at each other.

FELIX
Gaius Felix Victorinia!

CIARA
Did you just say your own name?

FELIX
Yeah. I don't know. Something just... happened in this moment, I thought I should....

CIARA
You ruined it.

REGULUS' HOUSE - OVERLOOK

Felix' awful statue trundles down a road in the city, covered in perfect muddy handprints, mostly in suggestive places.

Archaius and his group struggle to transport it. A bump dislodges the load again. They try to support it but it is slightly too heavy, pushing them to the ground agonizingly slowly.

Caesar and entourage are watching this from the overlook in Regulus' beautiful garden, from which most the city is visible. They're laughing uncontrollably. Caesar still has his banging tray.

Archaius finally starts to right the statue, using a big, knobbly plank of wood as a lever jammed right in Felix' crotch.

This makes Caesar laugh extra hard. Whenever he does, he gets excited and animated, and bangs his tray, eliciting wincing and squiriming in his hungover companions.

CAESAR
Thank you Regulus. This is gold.

Caesar's personal man, an epically dry, long suffering Greek philosopher HERO, hobbles over as fast as he can.

HERO
Master, master, I came as fast. What troubles you?

CAESAR
Oh, I'm sorry, Hero. I'm fine. Just, you know, I like to have you on hand. It's always a good time for a sto-ic.

Caesar says the word in a strange, affected way specifically to upset stoics.

Readers familiar with that philosophy's tenets might recognize this as a challenge. Hero appears to endure this continual battle of wits gracefully, but he is starting to develop a facial tic.

HERO
I live to serve.

Hero is often too dry to gauge.

CAESAR
Excellente.

The statue is now upright and in motion again. A lump stops the cart, but the men keep moving. They pile up and all fall face down in the muck together.

Caesar's entourage cackle and slap their thighs. Caesar bangs the tray enough that he finally notices the pain it is causing.

CAESAR (cont'd)
(looking down at the tray)
Oh dear. You devil! I cast you out!

Caesar throws the tray off the overlook. We hear it clatter and bang time and time again as it descends down the symbols of hierarchy we established in the opening. The others wince with every bang, but it j u s t k e e p s b o u n c i n g.

Barbatus throws up inside his mouth, wonders why he bothered hiding it, shrugs, spits..

Eventually Hero tries to break the terrible spell by talking over it. Our characters still wince and get a little distracted by a few more clatters through the next few lines

HERO
I believe that's Felix Victorinia, Caesar.

CAESAR
Who?

HERO
Patrician family. Famous human fodder farm for the bolder and more ambitious.

REGULUS
Old patrician, by the sounds. Like, old old patrician.
(MORE)

REGULUS (cont'd)
And older than that! Hardly noble at all, really. Last useful thing that family did for Rome was probably something like introducing Aeneas to a semi-divine cobbler.

BARBATUS
I think I heard they recently debuted some nubiles.

SUBTITLE
Marriageables.

DECIMUS
Classic Barb. Doesn't know crap about shit until there's some nubiles.

BARBATUS
It's my business! *You* should *know* that Caesar put me in charge of that morality commission!

CAESAR
Oh, Barbatus, that was supposed to be ironic. You haven't been actually doing that job, have you?

BARBATUS
(lying)
Of course not! I know a joke commission when I see one.

DECIMUS
Besides, he's been too busy since you made him high Vestal.

BARBATUS
What's the time, Hero?

CAESAR
Does my sto-ic look like a talking sundial to you?

REGULUS
Barb - Lie down, think of the Victorinia nubiles, we'll read *your* shadow.

Among this group, such banter is a delicate balance of affection and rivalry.

BARBATUS
The famous soldiers wit, Regulus. But regarding the time. I have to leave.

Looks all around.

BARBATUS
On unrelated matters! With your permission of course, Caesar.

CAESAR
Sure, whatever. Hey Hero, what's that hangover cure?

HERO
Whole fried canary.

CAESAR
Have one of that before you go if you like. If Reg stocks such a thing.

REGULUS
I'm no pleb! I always keep canaries for frying.

BARBATUS
The though alone has cured me. Farewell.

They all watch him leave. As soon as he's out of line of sight, Hero laughs. Caesar too. Regulus shrugs 'What?' at this. Hero is not one of the gang, but he knows how to match a vibe:

HERO
Who do you Latins think we are? Mud-drinking, radish-marrying, double-buttholed Celts? I recommend boiled cabbage with fenugreek seeds. *Stay away from the canary*!

BUSY STREETS OF ROME

Focused on a small shop. A grotty cook comes out to a canary, chirping in a cage. He grabs it from the cage and brings it inside. We hear a knife fall on a chopping block and the bird is silenced. After a second or two, bubbling oil.

Soon Barbatus emerges from this shop, grimacing at the aftertaste. He's still hungover, but he has important work to do. He looks out to the city and we see :

A montage of noblemen whacking peasants out of the way with rods, horrifically ill and mutilated beggars, outrageously bawdy sex workers fighting, languid senators being fed peeled grapes in sedan chairs.

HISTORIAN
To to modern senses, the sights, sounds, and smells of an ancient city would be quite... lurid... sordid... chaotic. But this depiction is excessive.

BARBATUS
(to historian)
Take it easy, it's only an establishing shot.

He walks through the streets a little and catches sight of SILO, a doughy nobleman in a sedan chair, he rushes up to catch him.

BARBATUS (cont'd)
Silo! Silo you good old fella.

SILO
(sing-song)
Sounds like somebody wants something.

SILO doesn't stop, and Barbatus has to jog and dodge to keep up the conversation

BARBATUS
You want something! That prestigious public morality commission.

SILO
The one personally handed to you on the authority and intelligence of our forever protector?

BARBATUS
The *true* will of Caesar is not always clear to us. Well, not all of us, Silo *Sapiens*

SILO
The Wise, now? It's correct. But what am I never ever called?

BARBATUS
What do you mean? I don't know what you mean!

SILO
Cut the crap, Barbatus. What is never ever my name?

BARBATUS
(shamefully)
Globacavernus.

SUBTITLE
Doughnuts.

BARBATUS
The thing about that: People *love* doughnuts...

SILO
(interrupting)
Stop wasting my time. The commission I will take for trade. But for the insult. And pay attention, this is how *actual* patricians do it and always did it before punks like you : one favor.

Silo points towards another chubby old elite in a sedan chair across the road.

Cut to Barbatus now jogging alongside that sedan chair. Huff, puff, and dry-wretch : the canary has been ineffective.

BARBATUS
(out of breath)
I'm telling you, the house of Silo - you know I have Caesar's ear. Great marriage material. Silo Sapiens the wise! *The Wise*!

This nobleman frowns, shakes his head, and points - just like Silo.

Now Barbatus knocks on the door of a building. Two burly city guard flank him. A proprietor sticks his head out.

BARBATUS (cont'd)
So I'm telling you - you know you've got to sell up, but now I'm really telling you, you've *got* to sell up. Celerissime!

SUBTITLE
The most Pronto!

The proprietor seems unconvinced, points to the next destination.

Now Barbatus is in a horse market, literally horse trading. An agent looks his horse in the mouth, shakes his head.

Barbatus pleads skywards in frustration. This upsets his hangover again. He rushes to a wall, leans with one hand on it, and vomits another time on the ground. The horse trader taps him on the shoulder and points. Barbatus nods but requires a moment against the wall to catch his breath. A stray dog sniffs at and starts to eat the throw-up.

Now Barbatus is in a busy square. He's sick and tired and overwhelmed. The crowds spin around him - he rubs his eyes and face in exhaustion, slips into a quiet alley to catch his breath. He slumps with his back against the wall.

Cyrenacius passes by on his way somewhere. Barbatus stands to greet him.

BARBATUS
Hail, great African conqueror! Please tell me that you've got a favor to trade today.

Cyrenacius strides towards Barbatus. Barbatus instinctively protects his privates.

CYRENACIUS
(affable)
Bro! Chill out! You're in luck, do you know my brother in law, Felix Victorinia?

Barbatus remembers the name from the statue. And, of course, the nubiles. He makes a subtle double-take.

BARBATUS
No offense, but a bit of a loser, or so I heard?

CYRENACIUS
I dunno, probably. But don't you need everyone you can get, these days? Doesn't everyone deserve a chance? Or something like that or whatever. I don't really, y'know, *get* it.

Barbatus tries to contain his relief.

CAESAR'S HOME - 'THRONE ROOM'

HISTORIAN
Many of the Caesars portrayed themselves as men of the people, and lived in surprisingly humble homes. But make no mistake, this was a still a royal court, no matter how domestically it may have been styled. Courtiers were expected to position themselves according to their station and always act according to the proper protocols.

This is *not* Regulus' villa, but is still far superior to Felix'. As our narrator has indicated, it is set up for court, with Caesar seated centrally throne-like and terraced areas allowing individuals to stand at different heights. It's intimidating.

The usual suspects, the entourage, occupy the terraces. They stand on different sides and far apart from each other as if they are filling out the space a full court might. Therefore, they have to speak loudly at all times here. Hero is also present by Caesar's side, outside the hierarchy.

HERO
Gaius Felix Victorinia!

Regulus, Decimus, and Barbatus stand bolt upright with their arms by their side, mocking the archaic stance of Felix' awful statue.

Felix enters. Unsure of exactly how much deference you're supposed to give a Caesar these days, he bows a little, raises his arm somewhat casually. He's incredibly awkward.

FELIX
(searching for a tone)
Hail Caesar.

Caesar also assumes the teasing pose.

CAESAR
Felix Victorinia.

Felix is deeply confused and quite frightened. He starts to gradually prostrate himself further and further, hoping to find the sweet spot by Caesar's reaction. The entourage are chuckling. Barbatus in particular is struggling to suppress uncontrollable laughter.

FELIX
(too enthusiastic)
Hai... Hail Caesar.

Felix is now very low, but Caesar is unchanged. He looks around and notices the way everyone is standing. *Maybe this is the new way you're supposed to hail Caesar?* Felix leaps up and also assumes the pose. This is too much for Barbatus, who lowers to his haunches, guffawing and pointing.

BARBATUS
Oooooooh! He thinks... He thinks *he's* supposed to...

Regulus' veneer is also cracking, but he's determined to break Barbatus. He hops around on the spot to face that target while maintaining the archaic stance.

REGULUS
Barb! This is serious. Stop laughing, please. A little decorum in the palace of Caesar!

Obviously this has the opposite effect. Barbatus Squeals.

Felix' deeply conflicted reaction further amuses him. His breaking point is passed. Barbatus literally pisses himself. With ancient Roman dress this is plainly obvious. A solid, visible stream hits the stone floor audibly, splashing, and running down the terraces through the cracks in the tiles.

Decimus is visibly disgusted, holding his hand to his mouth

DECIMUS
(offended)
Ugh.

Caesar steps part of the way towards Felix. Terrifying.

CAESAR
(powerfully)
Felix Victorinia, I've heard of your ideas. I've heard what you have been saying. But tell me, quickly, what of the future of Rome?

FELIX
Caesar, I think we deserve better. I mean, strictly only in terms of cleanliness. As I'm sure you're aware, we have the infrastructure...

CAESAR
No, no. I mean really. What of the *future of Rome.* Bear in mind, Caesar respects the brave and the truthful.

He steps even closer and exposes a gladius he wears. Felix gulps.

FELIX
Caesar, with all due respect, I...

We see a few moments from Felix' point of view, slowed down with adrenaline overload. He looks between everybody in the room. His fast, heavy heartbeat is audible.
Now a shot of Felix, overlaid : an eagle standard, Felix' own face as a death mask next to his ancestor's. Statues of Romulus and Remus.

FELIX (cont'd)
I desire the return of the republic.

Silence for a moment. Caesar rushes towards him, grabs him by the shoulders...

Felix shivers violently with dread... And also pisses himself. The results are similar, but since he is on the lowest level, a puddle begins to form at his feet.

Decimus is again horrified. Regulus further amused.

REGULUS
When in Rome...

... Yet the moment goes on. Caesar stares into Felix, squeezing his shoulders until the stream has concluded. But he knows how it goes.

CAESAR
That all?

Felix produces two final squirts, the second shorter than the first, and nods sheepishly.

Caesar smiles. He was mostly just messing.

CAESAR (cont'd)
I agree with you, noble citizen. Between you and me, I can't wait until Rome is in a place where I can finally give her back to herself.

Regulus is now a little less amused - a hint of jealousy and frustration creeps into him.

CAESAR (cont'd)
(finding the rhythm and rhyme)
I think I like you, Gauis Felix. So, you're driven by a passion for sanitation?

FELIX
(holding back tears, occasionally blubbering)
Yes, Caesar. Between the sewers, the water supply, and all the public services we have - you, your grace, you're responsible for the marvel that is this city - ultimately. We already have what we need for our glorious -- excuse me -- your glorious citizens to live in *far* better conditions than...

CAESAR
Enough! I can tell that you're a true old Roman soul. People have heard your words in the city of late. I'm already sold!

Caesar holds a hand out to his side without looking. Hero inserts a scroll.

CAESAR (cont'd)
This is a commission to improve urban sanitation marked with my personal seal. Use it appropriately, along with your family's resources, and do this thing of which you speak.

FELIX
(now crying)
Caesar, thank you! Thank you, Caesar! Thank you.

Caesar waves him away. He will stare at Felix until he leaves.

FELIX (cont'd)
I promise I won't let you down. I'm going to clean up this place.

Felix looks down.

FELIX (cont'd)
Starting right here!

Felix stoops and begins to mop up all of his own urine with an extraneous section of his toga. The others watch him demonstrate his diligence to Caesar by undertaking this carefully and thoroughly.

Felix now has a dirty ball of toga he has to nurse in front of him, and isn't quite sure how to excuse himself. He makes the archaic pose briefly, trying not to touch the sodden bundle to the clean part of his clothes too much. Barbatus puffs out his cheeks to stifle a laugh.

Finally Felix makes his way out, mostly backing out and bowing.

CAESAR
I can imagine no thing, no man, who would or could compromise your mission.

Once he's gone all the characters present relax and let out held in laughter. It's riotous. It is some time before they can continue.

DECIMUS
That was so mean. I love it.

Regulus is still a little pissy.

REGULUS
Caesar, is that what you call one of your 'joke' commissions?

CAESAR
Maybe. Let's see if he's any use.

REGULUS
(reluctant)
Yeah, makes sense. Wise.

CAESAR
That's why I'm the Caesar and you're...

REGULUS
Your son.

CAESAR
Oh right! Indeed you are. I keep forgetting we did that.

Caesar and Regulus look at each other - another subtle play of simultaneous levity, loyalty, and rivalry.

FELIX' HOUSE/COURTYARD

Felix arrives, still carrying his soggy bundle. Once he is inside and alone he exhales and cries, expelling a little tension and relaxing somewhat.

HISTORIAN
Of course, a commission from Caesar, no matter how trivial, still represented public office. Public office - the elusive first rung on the legendary ladder of rank among the nobility - the roadmap of prestige, the *cursus honorum.*

Felix realizes this, and pumps his fist in celebration.

We FREEZE FRAME on his expression of triumph, one hand a fist with the scroll, the other clenching his own pissy garment.

THE END

NB : The idea that the Romans had a building specifically for purging after overeating is a common misconception. A *vomitorium* is the main aisle of a stadium. It *disgorges* the audience into the streets.